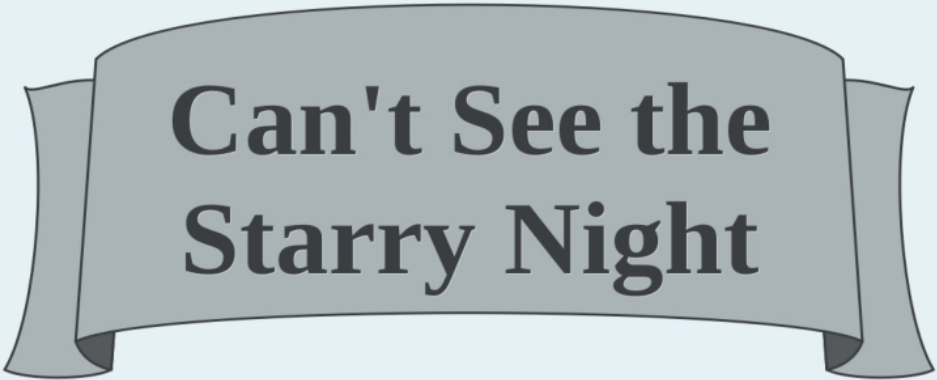




Can't See the Starry Night

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Summary:

“She kissed me, Eds, I swear!” Richie tried to argue and Eddie had really wanted to punch him.

“Yeah, you didn’t push her off, trashmouth! It takes two to tango, fucker.” Eddie snapped. He tried to push past Richie and storm off but the boy grabbed his wrist before he could get away.

“Baby, please, you know it meant nothing-”

“How could it mean nothing, Rich? You talked all night. You kissed and then you went out to dinner with her again last week... and you hurt me. For nothing?”

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Author's Note:

Hello! This is a one-shot fic that I wrote because I am re-watching boy meets world and all i see when i watch Cory and Topanga is Reddie so... this is what stemmed from that. Also i was craving angst.

Hope you enjoy!

Eddie lay in his bed, staring at his ceiling and gripping his cellphone tightly in his fist. He tried to fight the numbing feeling that was spreading through his body as he replayed his fight with Richie over and over in his head, but he couldn't.

"You kissed another person!" Eddie screamed, not caring that he was in the middle of the quad, people eating their lunches around them, their friends just a few feet away. If Richie wanted to have this conversation here, that was what he was going to get. Fuck everyone else.

"She kissed me, Eds, I swear!" Richie tried to argue and Eddie had really wanted to punch him.

"Yeah, you didn't push her off, trashmouth! It takes two to tango, fucker." Eddie snapped. He tried to push past Richie and storm off but the boy grabbed his wrist before he could get away.

"Baby, please, you know it meant nothing-"

*"How could it mean nothing, Rich? You talked all night. You **kissed** and then you went out to dinner with her **again last week...** and you hurt me. For nothing?" Eddie's voice had trailed off to a whisper.*

"Eds..."

*"**Don't.** Don't call me that, Richie... I just," Eddie threw his hands in the air, frustrated at the swell of emotions in his chest, "God I am so MAD at you! How can you say something like that doesn't mean anything? Things like this don't just happen for no reason, they are indicative of something greater, something-"*

“Eddie! I didn’t want it, okay she kissed me.”

*“And did you **stop** her?” Eddie accused. Richie ran his fingers through his hair, cheeks red.*

“No. No, Eds, you know what I did? I got on my knees and said ‘kiss me, Jamie, please. Kiss me and ruin my relationship with the most important person in my life’. That’s it, are you happy?”

*“Oh fuck you, Richie. You can’t be serious for **five minutes**?”*

*“No! How can I be serious when you **aren’t listening to me**? It meant nothing. And you’re right, things like that don’t happen for no reason. It happened to show me that there is no one on this earth that I could love more than you, Eddie,” Richie said, taking a deep breath and staring at Eddie with wide, sad eyes, “Please, you have to believe me.”*

“You needed someone else to figure that out?” Eddie asked after a long pause. He clenched his fists and felt tears start to spill over onto his cheeks.

“What?” Richie whispered. Eddie took a deep breath before answering.

*“I... I could probably forgive you for kissing her. But... but I never needed... to... **test** my feelings for you, Rich. I’ve known since I was ten years old that you were the person I wanted to be with, no matter anyone else. Clearly, you didn’t feel the same.” Eddie choked out.*

“No,” Richie said, distraught as he tried to put his hands on Eddie’s shoulders, to pull him closer, “No, that’s not true, I love you-”

“Please, Richie, stop. I... I just need a break. We need a break,” He squeezed his eyes shut, unable to look at Richie’s shocked face anymore and shook his head, “I can’t do this. I can’t.” He hiked his backpack up and turn around and ran, ignoring Richie’s pleas behind him.

That was a week ago and he had barely talked to Richie since, only to tell him coldly that he needed more time, more space. And now he was lying in bed, heartbroken and confused as to what to do with all this time... and space.

He was so used to moments filled with Richie’s laugh, with his stupid

jokes, to places filled with his gangly limbs and comforting warmth. And now he had none of that.

He and Richie had been together since the eighth grade and honestly, in love long before that. And they'd had fights since then, of course. Two people shouldn't date for four years without having *some* fights, but none of them were like this. None of those had left this heavy pit in Eddie's stomach and this aching hole in his heart and this harrowing fear that is was actually over between the two of them.

He didn't think it was possible to hurt this much and was he overreacting? Richie said it hadn't meant anything... but how could it *not*? How could he honestly say that allowing himself to connect with another person like that didn't change his feelings for Eddie?

Maybe he was being... 10% irrational, but that didn't change the fact that *every part of his body hurt*.

Almost ready? We're outside. His phone beeped with the text from Bev and Stan. They all had tickets to see the Van Gogh exhibit that was going to be in Portland. He had been planning to go with Richie, who he knew hated museums because it meant he had to be quiet and still and careful, which was the opposite of everything Richie, but he was going to go anyway because of how excited Eddie was.

He wasn't so excited about it anymore, but he still was going to go, stubbornly refusing to let Richie take anything else away from him.

Coming. He texted back, grabbing his blue cable-knit sweater off the back of his chair and throwing it on, choosing not to change out of the black sweatpants he'd been napping in. He looked at himself in the mirror and groaned. His eyes were still puffy and red; he had so obviously been crying.

He was really going to be rocking the break-up chic look.

When they got to the exhibit, Eddie's mood had lifted ever so slightly, both Bev and Stan keeping up distracting conversation with him.

"Jules Michelet, one of van Gogh's favorite authors, wrote of crows: 'They interest themselves in everything, and observe everything. The

ancients, who lived far more completely than ourselves in and with nature, found it no small profit to follow, in a hundred obscure things where human experience as yet affords no light, the directions of so prudent and sage a bird.' Hmm, I like that." Stan read out from the pamphlet he carried with him, small excerpts about each painting.

"Of course you do, bird-nerd." Eddie teased and Stan pushed his shoulder gently.

They were standing in front of *Wheatfield with Crows* and honestly, Eddie related. The painting felt... just on the edge of falling into something chaotic.

Same. Eddie thought.

"But I like it too." Eddie mumbled, voice scratchy from disuse. He saw Bev nod in his peripheral and she was about to move onto the next one, when-

"Eddie Kaspbrak?" a voice behind them asked. Eddie turned around, confused as to who in *Portland* would know his name. When he turned he saw a boy about his age, with bright eyes and a soft smile, staring at him. Eddie had no idea who he was.

"You two know each other?" Bev asked, staring between the two of them with a smile. Eddie opened his mouth to respond, but didn't really know what to say and was left just looking stupid. The boy laughed and nodded.

"Sort of. You probably don't remember me but, I remember you." He said and Eddie felt his cheeks flush. This boy was just *staring* at him and it made his stomach flutter in a way that confused him.

"What?" he managed to ask.

"I'm Jack Pearson, we were in the same third grade class for a couple weeks, before I left Derry. It sounds silly but, you changed my life." Jack said with a smile and Eddie felt his mouth drop again because what? He had *no* idea what this kid was talking about.

"I did?" Eddie asked and yeah, he was definitely making a fool of himself, speaking only in questions marks all the time. That was real

impressive, Kaspbrak.

“Yes. I used to get bullied a lot. Kids called me gay and weird because I liked to paint, liked to draw. You were one of the only ones who stood up for me. Told me not to let anyone tell me what I couldn’t be. I never forgot that.” Jack explained, voice fond and Eddie felt a smile creep across his face, completely unbidden. He vaguely remembered that, just because right after Jack left the class, the seat next to Eddie was vacant. This of course meant a certain Richie Tozier sat right next to him when he transferred to Derry later that month.

“Wow, he owes you, Ed. Make him pay.” Beverly said with a laugh. Eddie looked at her, kind of shocked, and saw his shock reflected in Stan’s face, next to her.

“I could show you around? This is one of my favorite exhibits.” Jack offered and Eddie looked over at him, taking in his silky brown hair and dark, smooth skin, trying to see past the fact that there were no freckles, no wide-brimmed glasses... and yet Eddie was still interested.

Which was... so weird.

“Is that such a good idea?” Stan muttered to Eddie. He was about to say something else when Beverly grabbed his arm and pulled him away.

“Oh, look it’s that painting I wanted to see called *Stan Shut Up He’s Cute*.” She said, winking at Eddie before leaving him alone with Jack. The boy looked at him and smiled, a question in his eyes.

“Okay,” Eddie nodded, “Where do you wanna go first?”

###

“I can’t believe it’s actually here, under this roof.” Jack breathed, staring straight ahead at the painting before them. For Eddie it felt like the first time that night that Jack’s eyes hadn’t been on him which was a bittersweet relief.

“It’s... so much more beautiful than the history books made it out to seem.” Eddie whispered and Jack laughed.

“I absolutely agree.”

“It feels so... spiritual, so peaceful. Even with all the movement and colors... it seems calm.” Eddie mused, “Like no matter what happens in that little town, the people are protected.”

“Like no matter what, they can look up at the sky and know they aren’t alone.” Jack continued and Eddie nodded.

“Exactly.” He sighed, aching for such a calm. It may have been the last painting they looked at, but it hit him hard nonetheless, blowing all of the previous ones out of the water.

“It’s a masterpiece.” Jack added and Eddie’s heart stuttered because he felt the other boy’s hand slip into his, tangling their fingers gently and Eddie... didn’t know what to do. It felt nice, intimate, and fitting for the moment, standing in front of such a beautiful painting, but...

“You’re really passionate about art, huh?” Eddie asked, pulling his hand back as naturally as he could so he would be able to turn to Jack with a smile. The boy seemed to know what he was doing but went along with it anyway, thank God.

“I am.” Jack agreed, “It’s nice to talk to someone else who understands.”

“Aww, I’m not that educated about it. My friend Bill, he’s the artist, he-”

“Hey don’t do that, don’t put yourself down. You have a lot to say, good instincts. I had a lot of fun talking to you.” Jack insisted. Eddie smiled and nodded, not lying at all when he responded.

“Me too. It was... really nice.” Jack smiled and Eddie blushed *again*. Fuck, he was so used to only Richie doing that to him. “I feel like I could talk to you about this stuff all day.” Eddie admitted.

“You did.” Eddie heard Bev say, coming up behind him.

“We gotta start driving back soon, Eddie.” Stan added. Oh yeah, he didn’t like driving in the dark, especially not in his dad’s car.

“What are you doing tomorrow night?” Jack asked, startling Eddie a little even though, really, he should’ve seen that coming.

“Umm... I’m not sure.” Eddie stuttered.

“If I come out to Derry will you have dinner with me?”

“I... don’t know if that’s such a good idea. I kind of just-” Jack cut him off, taking both Eddie’s hands in his.

“Hey, just think about it, yeah? I’ll be there, tomorrow, at the Derry Diner at 6. If you wanna join me, I’d love to see you there. If not, I’ll understand.” Jack said, squeezing Eddie’s hands softly before walking away.

“Wow.” Eddie whispered to himself.

“Oh my *gosh*. Eddie! How did it go?” Beverly squealed, although Stan over her shoulder seemed a little less excited.

“He asked me out.” Eddie said, point blank.

“Yeah, we heard, Ed,” Stan said, “Are you gonna go? I mean, you’re still technically just ‘on a break’ with Richie, isn’t this a little soon?” Eddie bit his lip because... yeah, *maybe*, but-

“Eddie, did you like him?” Beverly asked, face serious.

“Of course. We talked all day, he was sweet and funny and so intelligent and...”

“And what?” Bev asked.

“He’s not Richie.” Eddie admitted.

“Oh, Eds. Listen, Richie is my best friend. But he fucked up. You deserve a chance to see... if he’s still what you want. And yeah, maybe this guy isn’t Richie but he still swept you off your *feet*, babe. Go to dinner. See what happens.” Bev said, gripping Eddie’s arm.

“Okay,” Stan cut in, “I never thought I would be arguing on Richie’s behalf here but, you guys have been together for *so long*. And you’ve

barely been apart for a week, is now really the time for another guy?" Stan reasoned and Bev glared at him.

"I don't know," she admitted, "All I know is that I've watched you be *miserable* for the past week, Eddie, and today? With Jack? That was the first time I've seen you smile since you broke up with Richie. I don't want you to be unhappy, Eddie. Maybe this guy can be good for you." Bev said, squeezing Eddie's hand in her own and smiling encouragingly.

Eddie thought about it for a moment, trying to parse out whether or not he was an awful, awful human being. And then he thought about how nice that moment was, standing with Jack in front of *Starry Night* and he wondered...

"Maybe... but. I think Stan's right. I... I have to give Richie another chance before I decide anything." Eddie said definitively.

"What does that mean?" Beverly asked.

"Well, we were supposed to come to this together, right? I guess I want to see what would've happened today if he had been here instead."

###

"Eddie, what the hell are we doing here?" Richie asked, speaking for the first time in a while. He tried to talk at the beginning of the trip, but Eddie begged him not to. Eds didn't want to fight today, apparently.

Richie was on the other end of the spectrum. Richie wanted to fight. He knew it was the *silence* that was bad, the resignation that came before the end. He wanted to fight; he wanted Eddie to yell at him and hit him and tell him everything he felt because that was how they were going to fix this, by talking to each other, not pushing the other out.

"I want you to tell me what you see." Eddie said. He still didn't look at Richie, instead staring straight ahead at the painting in front of him. Richie couldn't make himself look away, though.

Eddie's hair was really growing out, the curls down around his ears now. His cheeks were flushed red, left over from the cold outside. His lips were slightly redder than usual, which made sense. Eddie bit his lip a lot when he cried. He was also wearing pink today which used to be Richie's third favorite color but quickly became his first when he saw how much it complimented Eddie's skin tone and-

"Stop staring at *me* and look at the *painting*, perv." Eddie said and Richie might be crazy but was that a smile his lips almost curled into?

Richie spared a glimpse at the painting in front of him.

"Yeah, Starry Night. I know it." Richie said before turning back to Eddie, who huffed and rolled his eyes.

"You *know* it?" Eddie repeated, sounding mad and *why was he mad?*

"Yes, I know it, I wrote my AP Art History essay on Van Gogh. Of course I know it." Richie explained, still not understanding what the *fuck* was going on, "Damn it, Eddie, why won't you *look* at me?" Eddie groaned and turned his back, running his fingers through his hair in frustration.

"Because it's too hard! I don't even know who you *are* anymore, Rich!"

"Well, fuck you, because I'm the one who's trying here. Say what you will but at least I'm fighting for us. Come on, can we just talk? Just give me a chance to-"

"You think I'm not *trying*?" Eddie replied angrily, finally turning around to glare at Richie, "This IS your chance. This painting." He said, gesturing wildly.

"Who gives a FUCK about this painting, Eds?"

"It is a *masterpiece*." Eddie snapped and Richie grabbed his hands as softly as he could when he was so hyped.

"*We* are a masterpiece," Richie yelled and Eddie's face went soft and sad, "I don't know why you want me to do this, but it doesn't *matter*

what I think about this painting, baby. All that matters is what we feel about each other. And I have loved you since the third grade, Eds. And I know... I know that I am going to be with you for the rest of my life... maybe you don't know that yet, but *I do*."

"Richie-"

"And I know I fucked up, I did. I am *so sorry*, but you have to understand, it doesn't change the way I feel about you. I used to think that I couldn't get close to other people because I was *afraid* that it would change how I feel about *you* but now I know... nothing will ever change how I feel about you. *Nothing*." Richie explained, desperately pulling Eddie as close as he could because Eddie looked like he was going to *cry* and Richie *hated that*.

"I don't know if I can believe that." Eddie muttered. Richie felt his heart shatter a little bit more when Eddie pulled back and turned to the painting again. "Tell me what you see." Richie watched Eds for a moment longer before sighing and acquiescing.

"It's *Starry Night*. It's arguably Van Gogh's most emotive piece, definitely his most popular, even though I'm personally partial to his self-portraits." Richie recited, searching for what to say when all he could think about was the numbness that was slowly spreading through his body, starting at the spot where Eddie's hand used to be. "He utilizes the swirling colors to keep your eye moving and yet also employs the yellow and blue to get your eye drawn to the sky. You get so lost in the grandeur and the pomp of the stars and the night that you almost miss the town below... I've always thought it was unfair, that instead of looking to the town, to the *people* for some revelation, he wants you to look to the sky. And honestly, I've read a lot about people saying it's supposed to be God's love and protection raining down on the town below, but to me, right now? It kind of looks more like the end of the world."

He felt Eddie staring at him and for the first time that day, Richie didn't look back.

###

"Listen, Bev, you and me and Ben, we've been dating for a while

now,” Bill said, talking slowly and maintaining an alarmingly consistent pressure on her hand that he was holding, “We’ve been going pretty good right?”

“Yeeeee.” Beverly allowed, slowing as she reached her locker.

“Good, so I’m going to get mad at you now because I think that our relationship can handle it... YOU T-T-TOLD HIM TO GO OUT WITH ANOTHER G-GUY?” Bill yelled and *oh, yeah, he was mad*. He was stuttering.

“Bill, I’m sorry, but you’ve seen Eddie! He’s been so sad, I don’t want that for my friend. Do you?”

“No, of course not, but... God, imagine how sad RICHIE is going to feel when he finds out?” Bill pleaded and Bev nodded.

“I know but... honestly, Bill? I trust that if they’re meant to be together, they will be. I know that Eddie loves Richie and if he really wants to be with him, he will be. And if that’s the case, going on this date will just be a wakeup call for him, you know? At least, that’s what I hope for.” Beverly explained as she grabbed her textbooks and slammed the locker shut behind her, leaning against it.

“But what if they both end up even more heartbroken? That’s really fucking risky, Bev.” Bill scolded, leaning next to her and moving in close.

“No. Because I trust my friend and I know it will work out. No matter what.” Bev leaned in and kissed Bill softly on the lips before turning around to pull him to class. As they rounded the corner, they immediately ran into Eddie who grinned up at Bev.

“Hey, Ed,” Beverly smiled, “How was your date last night?” She gripped her book, trying not to look nervous because *logically*, yes, she knew she should just want the best for her friends, even if that meant they weren’t together but... fuck, Richie really would hate her, she didn’t want him to hate her.

“It was *amazing*, Beverly. Seriously, the most important thing that’s ever happened to me. We *have* to talk.” He grabbed Beverly’s hand

and pulled her away. She looked back at Bill and mouthed *I'm so sorry*.

Bill looked heartbroken as he trailed behind her.

Eddie plopped down on the couch in the hall and looked up at them with his big eyes.

"So it was a good date?" Bev asked, sitting next to him. Bill stayed near her shoulder, wrapping an arm around her.

"It was the *best*. He took me to that diner I love and we had so much common and we talked all night and then... he kissed me." Eddie said and Bev felt Bill's arm tighten around her shoulders.

"Wow, that's g-g-great, Ed." Bill managed and *aww, so cute how bad of a liar he was*.

"So you really like him?" Beverly asked, making herself sound supportive. Eddie's face lit up and that *grin*. Beverly hadn't seen him smile like that since Richie.

"I'm in love with him, Bev." Eddie said, never dropping that smile, but damn, did Bev's stomach drop.

"What?" Bill asked, appropriately shook.

"*Whoa*, Eddie, you're coming off a really long relationship and I think you might be feeling some things you don't understand." Beverly tried to explain gently, but Eddie just shook his head.

"Do you know what I felt when Jack kissed me, you guys?" Eddie asked, looking between both of them excitedly.

"I mean... shit, probably." Beverly replied, awkward as fuck, but thoughts of kissing Ben and Bill for the first time shot through her-

"*Nothing*." Eddie stated simply.

"Nothing?" Bill asked. His face was perfectly reflecting Beverly's in complete and utter confusion.

"I texted him last night and told him I had fun but... that there was someone else. Because, I am in *love*, guys, I am in love with Richie Tozier and there is no one else that I want. There is nothing I can't get through with him because this isn't high school *I love you, oh I love you too*, no. This is real... I'm *taken*." Eddie laughed and ran his fingers through his hair and Bev was about to congratulate him, she really was, but someone spoke before her.

"Was that a conversation I wasn't supposed to overhear?"

###

Richie's hands were shaking. Was his whole body shaking? No, it was just his hands... for now.

"Richie." Eddie whispered, smiling up at him and *oh fuck was he dreaming?* Did he wake up this morning? "How much did you hear?" Eddie asked, standing up to move in front of him.

"Um... you went on a date?" Richie asked and his stomach felt the leftovers of jealousy that had weighed it down when he'd first heard that, but now it was tempered slightly by the fact that Eddie loved him again???

"Yeah, I did," Eddie admitted, that stupid perfect fucking smile still on his beautiful face, "What are you gonna do about it?" Eddie teased, grabbing the edges of Richie's flannels and pulling him in close. Was he allowed to kiss him? Is that where this was going?

"Am I allowed to kiss you now?" Richie asked, stomach fluttering because he wanted to kiss Eddie *so bad oh my God*.

"If you want to, yes." Eddie said and his cheeks flushed red, seeming nervous. Which was just ridiculous.

"If I want to, *Jesus, Eds*." He muttered before leaning in and kissing him hard. Richie loved kissing Eddie, it always felt like what he was literally put on this earth to do. Eddie, who was always ready for a fight, somehow always went soft in Richie's arms, the two of them practically melded together.

"You were right, Rich," Eddie said, pulling back for breath after a

while, “I never understood how you could kiss someone else but feel so deeply for me that nothing could change that. I didn’t understand, no matter how many times you told me. I’m sorry for that. But I understand now.” Richie shook his head.

“Don’t be sorry... I went back to the painting. I tried to see... what you said saw? About protection and love and I realized that I don’t see that in things, Eds, not without you. You help me in so many ways and I almost ruined that and I am *so sorry*-”

“Don’t be. I love you, Richie. Forever.” Eddie said, smiling so wide Richie felt his heart mush back together into one blobby-Eddie-obsessed organ again.

“Thank *God*.” Both Richie and Bill exclaimed, because everything really was going to be alright.

Author's Note:

comments make me cry from happiness